

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L USUN 0248

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PORG, UK, GN, FJ
SUBJECT: COMMITTEE OF 24 (C-24) PROSPECTS FOR A UK VISITING MISSION
TO OBSERVE BANABAN REFERENDUM

1. REQUESTING THAT HIS REMARKS BE TREATED IN STRICT
CONFIDENCE, UK MISOFF WOODS GAVE US THE FOLLOWING RUNDOWN
ON THE PROSPECTS OF A UK INVITATION TO THE C-24 FOR A
VISITING MISSION IN 1978. WOODS NOTED THAT, WITH THE
POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF THE TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS, THE
UK HAS RUN OUT OF SUITABLE TERRITORIES FOR C-24 VISITING
MISSIONS. THE TURKS AND CAICOS PRESENT A SPECIAL DIFFICULTY
THIS YEAR BECAUSE OF THE UPCOMING ELECTION. HMG BELIEVES
IT WOULD BE DESIRABLE TO HAVE AN EXPERIENCED GOVERNOR IN
OFFICE AT THE TIME OF A VISITING MISSION.

2. THERE IS, HOWEVER, SOME POSSIBILITY OF A VISITING MISSION
TO OBSERVE A REFERENDUM CONCERNING THE SOVEREIGNTY OF BANABA
(OCEAN ISLAND). WHILE THE SOLOMONS AND TUVALU WILL COME
TO INDEPENDENCE IN 1978 AS PLANNED, THE GILBERTS' INDEPENDENCE
WILL PROBABLY SLIP TO 1979 BECAUSE OF THE BANABAN QUESTION.
A RECENT BAIRIKI RESOLUTION CALLS FOR A UN-OBSERVED
REFERENDUM, IN WHICH ALL GILBERTESE AND BANABANS WOULD
PARTICIPATE, TO DETERMINE THE SOVEREIGNTY OF BANABA. THE
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FIJIANS, WHOSE CONSENT IS REQUIRED SINCE A MAJORITY OF THE
BANABANS LIVE ON RABI ISLAND IN FIJI, HAVE NOT YET TAKEN
A DECISION, BUT HMG HOPES THEY WILL AGREE, IN WHICH CASE
THE UK WILL INVITE A C-24 MISSION. WOODS SAID UKUN WILL
APPROACH SALIM SOON TO INFORM HIM THAT THERE IS NO SUITABLE
TERRITORY FOR A MISSION, THAT HMG IS MIFFED BY THE COMMITTEE'S
TREATMENT OF THE CAYMEN ISLANDS' REPORT, AND THAT THERE IS

A POSSIBILITY OF A BANABAN REFERENDUM MISSION.

3. COMMENT: IF THE FIJIANS AGREE TO THE REFERENDUM,
WE SHOULD CONSIDER TRYING TO ORGANIZE OUR OWN VISITING
MISSION TO A US TERRITORY--IF THE DEPARTMENT DECIDES TO
EXTEND SUCH AN INVITATION--AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE, SINCE
WE WILL HAVE TO COMPETE WITH THE BRITISH FOR SUITABLE
MISSION MEMBERS IN A RELATIVELY SMALL POOL OF SUCH
CANDIDATES.
LEONARD

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